

## Presidential Task Force for Opportunity and Equity

March 4, 2021

### Minutes

#### Updates – General Burgess

- Tiger giving day raised just north of \$1 million total and about \$370,000 was raised to support several DEI projects and scholarships.
  - The Together We Will initiative was pushed by the task force. On Tiger Giving Day, the scholarship fund raised \$287,400. Prior to Tiger Giving Day, the fund received a substantial boost with a \$250,000 gift. The Together We Will scholarships will be awarded to students starting this summer and continue through the fall. The scholarships will be split – 70% to undergraduate students and 30% to graduate students.
- Gen. Burgess stated that Dr. Gogue responded immediately to the Auburn Students & Community for Change's List of Demands to say we are in receipt of it and that a response would be forthcoming. Gen. Burgess said the letter Dr. Gogue sends to the group will be shared with the task force.
- Gen. Burgess also said Dr. Gogue received a letter from the Alabama NAACP. They asked to meet with Dr. Gogue. A meeting is scheduled for March 19. Dr. Gogue, Gen. Burgess and other senior administrators will meet with them. He will report back to the Task Force about what they discussed.
- Update on Graduate Student Meeting
  - The meeting is set for Thursday, March 11, at 6 p.m.
  - A link will go out to all graduate students, members of the presidential task force and subcommittees.
  - All graduate students are welcome.
  - Task force members should attend.
  - The graduate subcommittee will start soon after this initial meeting.
    - Dr. Jared Russell and Dean George Flowers agreed to co-chair the subcommittee.
  - GPOs should be a part of the committee.
  - The committee will be very graduate student heavy.
  - Dr. Kimberly Mulligan suggested that students from each college should be represented.
  - Dr. Clayton stated the Black Graduate and Professional Student Association (BGPISA) said they want the meeting to be an honest and open conversation and not an ambush. Format will be a free-flowing conversation. There are discussions about having facilitators. The students mentioned having Dr. Fasina, Dr. Mulligan and/or Dustin Johnson as possible facilitators.
  - One purpose of the meeting is to ask the graduate students what they want to see come out of the task force or changes they would like to see as a result.

#### Update on Diversity Statement – Dr. Taffye Clayton

- Chacoloby Burns-Johnson said the diversity statement speaks to what we are doing, what we are striving to be and what we are building. Not just having the statement, but how are we living it?
- The suggestions for improvement that were made last meeting still need to be incorporated.
  - Dr. Strunk asked if will add gender identity and gender expression will be added.

## **Updates to the Staff Recruitment/Retention Sub-committee – Gretchen VanValkenburg**

- Ms. VanValkenburg will do her update next week instead of this committee meeting.

## **Subcommittee Break-outs**

### **Student Retention**

**Chair:** Dr. Joffery Gaymon

**Members:** Akilah Alwan, Madison Birckhead, Mikayla Brown, Chacolby Burns-Johnson, Angela Cannon, Rick Cook, Oladiran Fasina, Ada Ruth Huntley, Seymour Irby, Ronny Isaac, Lastella Paradise-Watson, Gretel Thornton, Jeffrey Turnipseed and Rett Waggoner

- Schedule adjustments - March 11, Ada Wilson, AVP OID
- The final subject matter experts will be presenting on retention and student success items during the next few meetings.
  - All presentations including PPT and Zoom recordings, are located on shared drive.
- New folder in the Box drive - Student demands and climate study
  - [Auburn Students & Community for Change](#)
  - List of Demands have been added to the shared drive. The document is comprehensive and includes a list of demands/ request for action. Demands are organized in four categories and each category includes a recommendation followed by a backup plan:
    - Monetary Commitment
    - Campus Culture
    - Education and Training
    - Structural Changes
  - We need to ensure that the requests have representation in our recommendations.
- **Presentation** from Dr. Kimberly X. Mulligan, Assistant Dean of Inclusion, Equity, and Diversity, College of Sciences and Mathematics.
  - Dr. Mulligan provided a presentation about COSAM's college-level efforts to increase diversity and inclusion.
  - Subcommittee members discussed the potential of replicating the same model campus-wide.

### **Equity & Social Justice Center**

**Chair:** Dr. Melody Russell

**Members:** Katrina Akande, Michael Bennett, Michael Brown, Taffye Clayton, Kevin Coonrod, Robin Jaffe, Kimberly Mulligan, Jared Russell, Jailin Sanders, Joellen Sefton, Kamden Strunk, Giovanna Summerfield & Gretchen VanValkenburg

- We have received a great number of detailed responses to the inventory of projects associated with Black and African American studies/research/projects from a number of colleges across campus. There is a great range of information and resources in the materials. We acknowledged that we should be messaging our work better and will take steps to improve.
- We would like to find common themes that embrace all scholarly work represented in the inventory. We discussed how to collate the information so it can be quickly accessed, absorbed,

and discussed. Putting together an Excel spreadsheet was suggested and considered. The Excel sheet will give us an opportunity to put together pie charts and look for themes that will help us focus the Institute's work. Suggestion was made to disaggregate based on content, and then geographically through the different regions of the state of Alabama. A task force member volunteered to work on this project and another suggested we also seek assistance from a graduate student.

- Topics immediately expressed as particularly worthy after first glance review of the inventory included research or scholarship centered around the Black and African American experience; health disparities; educational disparities, K – 12, and as undergraduates; the Lance Project; theatre ideas, and a number of entries relating to the Alabama Black Belt region. A comment was made that a good bit of research collected in our inventory focuses on civil rights, and research on health disparity was another example.
- In that context, we continued discussion on the scope of the Institute, whether it be strictly towards the state of Alabama or more regional to include the South. Consensus was expressed that the larger regional area of the Black experience in the South would be appropriate. Our hope is that learnings from the Institute can be applied widely: nationally and internationally.
- Points made were disparity in resources in opportunities and resources in K – 12 that, if addressed, would lead to more underrepresented students enrolling at Auburn. The point was expanded by Auburn giving students a reason to want to attend the university. One suggestion was facilitating opportunities for employment after graduation.
- We discussed internships, paid and unpaid for students in the institute. One point of view stated that unpaid internships widen opportunity gaps and another was made that unpaid internships provide opportunities to build and learn from mentorship relationships and experiential developments. A declaration was made that both paid and unpaid internships have their particular merits. Another noted that Dr. Freeman Hrabowski of University of Maryland, Baltimore County speaks of the importance of internships for traditionally underrepresented groups and that it would be wonderful for him to speak at Auburn.
- Homework: Continue looking through documents. Come to next week's meeting with 3 – 5 major themes that strike each of us.